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Rookwood Pottery

At The

Paris Exposition

1900

Received The

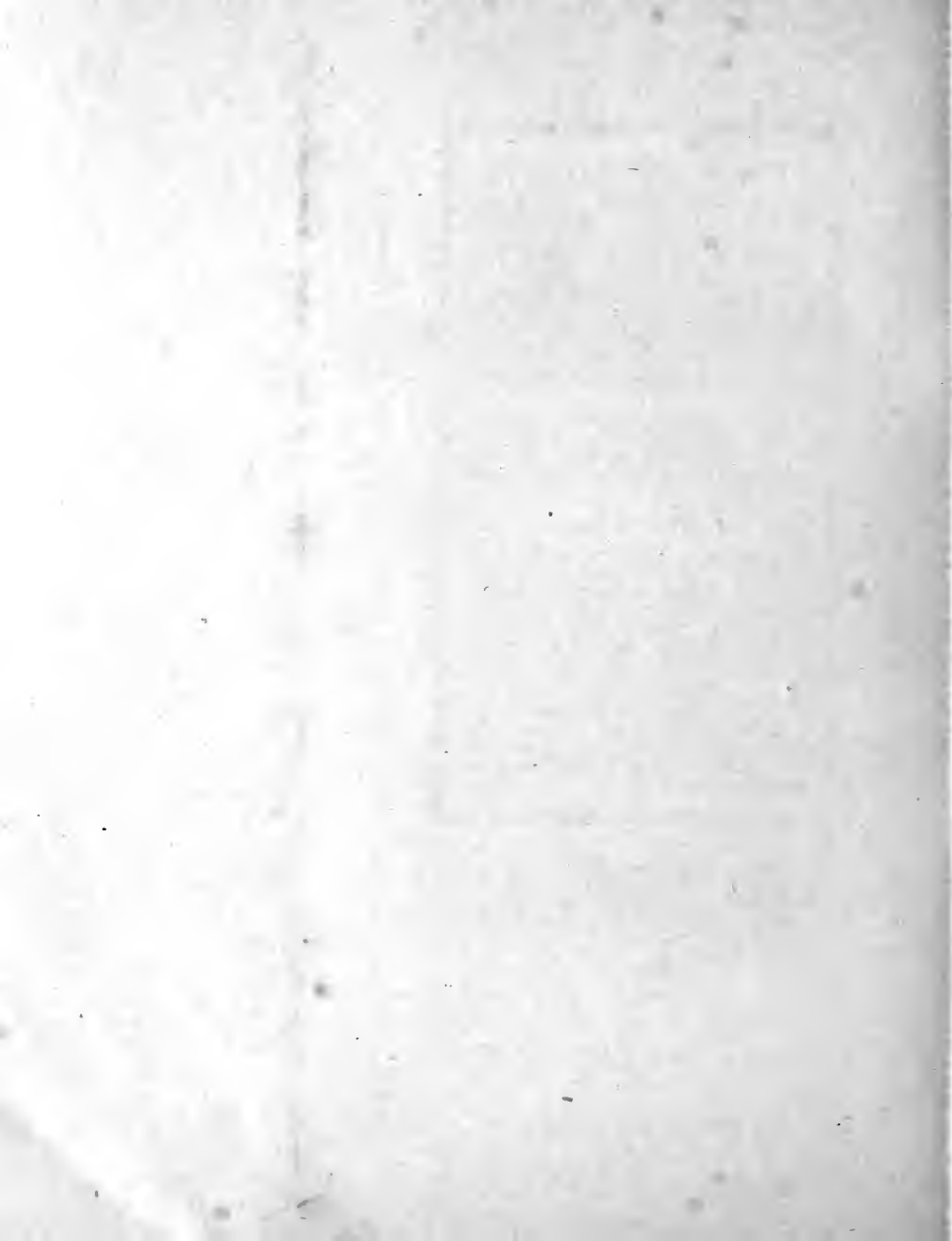
GRAND PRIZE

The Highest Possible Award.

TITLE BY A. R. VALENTIEN.
COVERS BY W. P. McDONALD.

Rookwood Pottery Cincinnati



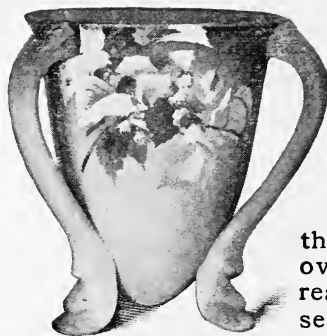




A Visit to Rookwood.



ANY who are interested in Rookwood may care to know that the pottery is open to visitors daily, except on the afternoon of Saturday, which is always a half holiday. The ride from the Cincinnati Postoffice on the Zoo and Eden Park line takes less than ten minutes, in-



cluding the elevation of the car on the Mt. Adams Inclined Plane, one of the experiences a visitor to Cincinnati is likely to seek, partly for the extended view of the city. It is also over this road one reaches the Art Museum, in Eden Park as well as the Zoological Garden.

The Rookwood building rambles picturesquely over the bluff point of Mt. Adams. It is an interesting example of the Early English style of architecture, with frame and cement walls and tile roof. The architect was Mr. H. Neill Wilson, of Pittsfield, Mass., but formerly of Cincinnati. The plans, however, were made by Mr. W. W. Taylor, President of the Pottery. The scratchwork decoration of the cement panels was devised by the modeler of the works.



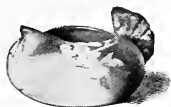
Attendants are always present to show the wares to visitors and to explain the complicated processes of manufacture. One sees the preparation of the clay by machinery of special make; watches the potter at his wheel deftly throwing the clay into



all manner of beautiful forms; or examines the molds used in casting other pieces. Then, the great kilns are to be inspected. In one apartment is stored the decorated ware in the clay, before firing. In another it is seen in the biscuit. Finally, in the warerooms one may study the great variety of forms, decorations, and glazes for which



Rookwood is known. One is not then surprised to learn that a finished piece of Rookwood has passed through twenty-one hands.





What Rookwood Is.

WHAT is it that gives Rookwood a high rank among artistic ceramics? Why has it attracted the attention of connoisseurs and potters the world over? There



must be in it something new,—an individuality that does not compare or conflict with other wares,—due to a return to fresh impulses in the potter's art. Evidently, Rookwood presents to the lover of pottery a pleasure different in kind from

any he finds elsewhere. Some one has well said that it is the presence of qualities, not the absence of faults that gives value to a work of art.

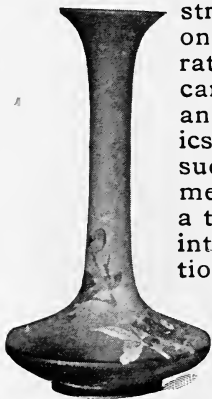
Rookwood has that kind of character—organic, we may call it—which comes from growth. The seed germ was simple and primitive, free from tendency to follow established types of pottery. It was the primeval clay working instinct to make pottery,—but not this ware or that ware. Kiln after kiln



brought experiences, and with them knowledge of the possibilities of the materials at hand. Little by little the capabilities of American clays were in part mastered, and the limitations of the process of slip decoration on the raw clay were ascertained. Gradually one

aim and another was dropped, and the main tendency of Rookwood asserted itself. The

plant strove upward, gaining strength from concentration upon the "blind purpose"—felt rather than known. Finally came the perfect fruit, fresh and new to the world's ceramics. And the key to its peculiar success lies in this development by growth. We may get a technically perfect, and very interesting, result by a combination of beautiful qualities selected from various wares,



but there will be no artistic vitality without the presence somewhere of a character germ to fuse all

together. Thus, imitation, no matter how close, fails. Rookwood has met its own problems from the beginning, taking all the help it could from previous experience, but growing from its own root, nourished in our native soil. That is why Rookwood has the organic vitality to which its success is attributed.



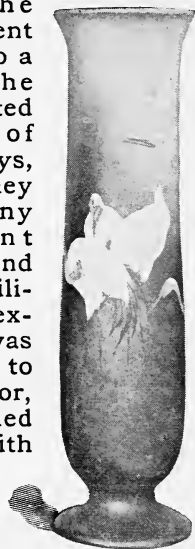
Let us briefly trace the line of this growth. It would be difficult to determine just what in 1874 and 1875 caused a number of women in Cincinnati to experiment in the decoration of ceramics, and to decide just how they were influenced by the exhibits at the Centennial Exhibition in 1876. That France and Japan made a deep impression upon them, as upon other artists at that time, is undoubted. At any rate, these Cincinnati women, who had shown in Philadelphia some of their work in over-glaze porcelain





decoration, returned home with stronger enthusiasm. They soon tried other processes of decoration under the glaze; went farther into a study of the body; tested all sorts of native clays, of which they found many excellent

ones in Ohio and Indiana, and learned some of their possibilities. One important line of experiment, in 1877 and 1878, was in the application of color to the wet clay body. The color, diluted with slip,—clay thinned with water,—was applied with paint brushes as a decoration on the raw clay vase. The idea was to produce a new pottery of our native clays, by applying color decoration in the material itself before firing, to make body and decoration a



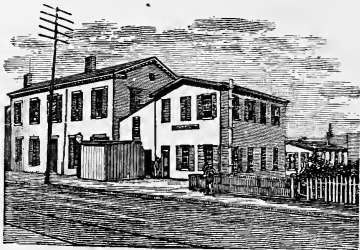




homogeneous mass in the first firing, and then to protect and enrich this biscuit with a glaze.

Among these Cincinnati women who tried their hands at making pottery was Mrs. Maria Longworth Storer, who had the enthusiasm of the artistic temperament coupled with fixity of purpose and financial resources. Mrs. Storer had the courage to open a pottery, which she called Rookwood,

the name of her father's country place on the hills above. This was in 1880, and on Thanksgiving Day the first kiln was drawn. Until 1892 the pottery remained in this location on Eastern Avenue, year by year modifying the old school building, and spreading out here and there until the possibilities of the site were quite outgrown. Then the piece of ground on the bluff of Mt. Adams, overlooking all of



lower Cincinnati, was bought, and in 1892 the present picturesque building was completed as a permanent home, with every condition favorable to larger and better production. In 1889 the works had become self-supporting, so that Mrs. Storer could withdraw her aid. The business was then transferred to a company under the control of Mr. W. W. Taylor, who had co-operated with Mrs. Storer since 1883.



As the pottery became established it would have seemed natural to many others to send away for skilled decorators, men experienced in ceramic processes in Europe. Not so here, for the dominating idea was that Rookwood must grow

from within out, that it must make its own style of decoration, find its own processes. Young men and young women, trained to draw and paint in the Art Academy of Cincinnati, of which Joseph Longworth, Mrs. Storer's father, was the great patron, have been developed into decorators for Rookwood. The sole exception was the employment of one Japanese. While these artists have year after year progressed in working

out the possibilities of this decorative medium, making their own technique, the attention of practical potters has been given to

the preparation of clay for the body, to the study of glazes, and to the beautifying of form. The direction, without which all this must have been aimless, has come mostly from Mrs. Storer and Mr. Taylor, though others have from time to time helped with friendly criticism. The Pottery is managed on lines opposite to the prevailing factory system, as the effort is to attain a higher art, rather than



cheaper processes. Absolutely no printing patterns are used. A spirit of freedom and liberality has prevailed, in order that the decorators may in every way be encouraged to cultivate individual artistic feeling. Thus, the pottery sent all its workers to the World's



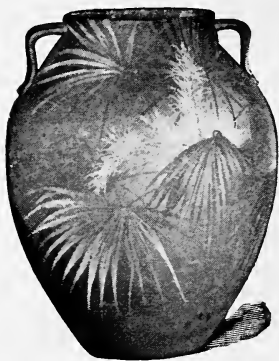
Fair in 1893, has sent several of its decorators to Europe for a summer, and one to Japan.

Now, what has been the general drift of Rookwood, and what is it to-day? The native clay from the start inclined its color quality toward yellows, browns and reds, and the decorative medium lent itself to a rather luxuriant style of ornament in rich arrangements of warm color, all of which the transparent glazes sought to merge in a deep, mellow tone. As the command of material has

strengthened, the beauty of the ware has steadily gained in a harmony of all the elements which compose it, until form, color, decoration, and glaze, combine to produce those things of beauty which are Rookwood in its vital being. Just what is that spark of life evades analysis. It is that in art which one feels without defining. It would be an error to infer that Rookwood is limited to a warm yellow, or red tone, for even dark pieces have often been relieved with deep rich greens and blues, and there has latterly developed an important series of light arrangements in pale blue, translucent greens, and even some fiery single color reds. But in

each of these we find the same mellow tone, the same brilliant glaze, as pleas-

ant to the touch as to the eye,—the same essential characteristics of Rookwood.



Varieties of Rookwood.

THE manner in which Rookwood has grown has necessarily given rise to a considerable variety of wares, and the experiments which continue to be



made may be expected to add constantly to these, as individuality and freshness are systematically striven for within the broad limits of character pe-

culiar to Rookwood. The low toned wares, usually yellow, red, and brown in color, with flower and figure decoration, are too familiar to need further description. Closely related to these are the remarkable glaze-effects known as "Tiger Eye" and "Goldstone," and a series of "Solid Color" pieces.



THE "TIGER EYE"

takes its name from a strange luminosity of the glaze in places where one catches glimpses of mysterious striations, which seem to glow with a golden fire, indefinable in words. These happy accidents of the kiln are necessarily very rare.

"GOLDSTONE"

is another glaze effect resembling the glistening of golden particles in aventurine, but rather more limpid by reason of the glaze. Both the "Tiger Eye" and "Goldstone" are seen on dark grounds.

THE SOLID COLOR

pieces comprise many of the richest and deepest reds and browns, some so intense that only actual sunshine will reveal the elusive hue. Others are covered with feathery mottlings, one color often playing almost





imperceptibly through another, with occasionally a pleasant grayness of surface as though catching light. Some are combinations of gray greens and browns. There have also been made a few small pieces of brilliant red, some of the "Sang de Boeuf" quality, others lighter.

"AERIAL BLUE"

is the descriptive title of a delicate mono-chromatic ware with a quiet decoration in celestial blue on a cool, grayish white ground.



"IRIS"



designates a large class of effects with a considerable range of color based upon a warm gray tone. Delicate pinks, soft blues and greens, creamy whites and yellows, play tenderly into the gray scheme. In these lighter wares a more crisp decoration is used, and skillful treatment is



required to avoid heaviness, which is entirely absent from the designs here employed.

Another departure in the same general direction is the



“SEA GREEN,”

also a light-colored decoration varying from a mellow, opalescent sea green relieved by a few glowing warm touches, to a cooler green with bluish accents.

It is in this broad gamut that the collector's interest in Rookwood lies. Always individual, there is never a duplicate. To varied artistic intention are to be added all the artistic accidents of firing—so that one can not strictly classify Rookwood with its ever-changing decorative motives, color harmonies and glazes.

Rookwood Honors.



THE Twelfth Annual Exhibition (London, 1887) of Paintings on China. Special mention.

Pottery and Porcelain Exhibition of the Pennsylvania Museum, Memorial Hall, Philadelphia, November, 1888. First Prize for 'Pottery Modeled and Decorated,' and First Prize for "Painting Underglaze."

Exhibition of American Art Industry, Pennsylvania Museum, Memorial Hall, Philadelphia, November, 1889, (Pottery and Porcelain Section). First Prize Gold Medal for Faience.

Exposition Universelle, Paris, 1889. Gold Medal.

World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893. Highest Award. Also, exhibited in the Fine Arts Building by invitation.

Exposition Universelle, Paris, 1900, Grand Prix.

Examples purchased for the following Museums: Sevres National Factory, Paris; Royal Industrial Art Museum, Berlin; Museum of Industry, Fribourg, Switzerland; Royal Industrial Museum of Wurtemberg, Stuttgart, Germany; Industrial Art Museum, Christiania, Norway; Industrial Art Museum, Breslau, Germany; Museum of Brunn, Austria; Museum of Prague, Bohemia; Imperial Commercial Museum of Tokyo, Japan; Pennsylvania Museum, Philadelphia; Museum of Cincinnati; Museum of Hamburg, Germany, among others.

Marks used at Rookwood.

*Rookwood Pottery
Cincinnati
1881*

Incised or painted on the base by the decorator. Usually with a date. The most common mark prior to 1882.

A variation of the above; stands for Rookwood Pottery, Cincinnati, Ohio, Maria Longworth Nichols.

R.P.C. O.M.L.N.



In relief or stamped. Sometimes in connection with a date. Prior to 1883.



Rarely used.

The kiln mark was either Stamped in color on the biscuit, thus—



Or impressed in the clay, as on the left. It also appears in connection with dates.



Impressed in the clay.
Used for a short time only.

**ROOKWOOD
1882**

Impressed in the clay. The regular mark from 1882, the date changing each year, until 1886.



This mark was adopted in 1886.

The flame at the top indicates 1887.



The addition of a flame each year makes the 1895 mark.

It is also customary for purposes of record, to stamp on the bottom of each piece a shape number with a letter indicating size, and another letter referring to the color of the clay used in the body of the piece, W for white, R for red, Y for yellow, S for sage, G for ginger.

Decorator's Marks.

It is customary for the decorators to cut their initials in the clay on the bottom of pieces painted by them. The monograms are shown on the two pages below:

A.R.V.

A. R. Valentien.

WMD

Wm. P. McDonald.

M.A. Daly

Matt A. Daly.

A.M.V.

Anna M. Valentien.

♀

Grace Young.

H.E.W.

Harriet E. Wilcox.

K. Shirayamadani

K. Shirayamadani.

B

Amelia B. Sprague.

A.V.B.

Artus Van Briggie.

S

Sallie Toohey.

O.C.R.

O. Geneva Reed.

M.N.

Mary Nourse.

S

Carrie Steinle.

C.A.B.

Constance A. Baker.

J

Josephine E. Zettle.

L.N.L.

Elizabeth Lingenfelter.

J.M.
 L.A.
 S.L.
 R.
 E.
 F.
 R.F.
 A.D.S.
 E.R.
 S.
 C.
 C.C.L.
 L.V.B.
 L.L.
 I.B.
 S.
 M.H.
 H.A.
 E.C.L.
 W.
 V.B. —

Sallie E. Coyne
 John D. Wareham.
 Leonore Asbury.
 Sturgis Laurence.
 Fred. Rothenbusch
 Edward G. Diers.
 E. T. Hurley.
 Rose Fechheimer.
 Adeliza D. Sehon.
 Edith R. Felten
 Sara Sax.
 Charles Schmidt.
 Clara C. Lindeman.
 Leona Van Briggie.
 Laura E. Lindeman
 Irene Bishop.
 Jeannette Swing.
 Marion H. Smalley.
 Howard Altman.
 Eliza C. Lawrence.
 Wm. Klemm.
 Virginia B. Demarest.

Comments on Rookwood.

OUTSIDE of Japan and China we do not know where any colors and glazes are to be found finer than those which come from the Rookwood Pottery. The yellows, greens, reds, and browns are clear, bright and strong, and of great depth and richness in the tones, free alike from that crudity which offends in almost all our home products in this field, and from that morbid air of green-and-yellow melancholy which the English factories at one time made shapes, indeed, tainted at the com- beauty and reason, ble, and the Rook- shows good taste principles which of the system of sical, but its mana- that these princi- seeds in nature, are development on the result of their the harmony, beauty, and variety of the forms which they give to the clay.—*Clarence Cook, in "The Studio."*



The pieces produced at Rookwood Pottery rank among the best. They have attracted the attention of connoisseurs abroad, and the peculiar glaze known as "tiger eye" may be reckoned as a *chef d'œuvre* of ceramic art. Despite the great losses incurred in the first few years of its existence, it has never wavered from its first object, that of producing a pottery which should be a credit to the country.—*Prof. E. S. Morse, author of "Japanese Homes."*

The art of Cincinnati has a good deal the air of being indigenous, and the outcome in the arts of carving and design and in music has exhibited native vigor. The city has made itself a reputation for wood carving and for decorative pottery. The Rookwood Pottery, the private enterprise of Mrs. Bellamy Storer, is the only pottery in this country in which the instinct of beauty is paramount to the desire of profit. Here for a series of years experiments have been going on with clays and glazing, in regard to form and color, and in decoration purely for effect, which have resulted in pieces of marvelous interest and beauty. The effort has always been to satisfy a refined sense rather than to cater to a vicious taste, or one for startling effects already formed. I mean that the effort has not been to suit the taste of the market, but to raise that taste. The result is some of the most exquisite work in texture and color anywhere to be found, and I was glad to learn that it is gaining an appreciation which will not in this case leave virtue to be its own reward.—*Charles Dudley Warner, in "Harper's Magazine."*

From a Paper Read before the Ceramic Congress, World's Fair, Chicago, by Mr. Charles F. Binns, of the Royal Worcester Factory.

To take first the native production of which every American should be proud—the Rookwood Pottery of Cincinnati. You may handle and examine any piece of this ware, with but very few exceptions, and derive the keenest satisfaction in so doing. The decorative subjects are well chosen, admirably fitted to the form,—and while treated with perfect accuracy of drawing, they suggest rather than display their meaning. Then examine the color; it is soft, subdued, and rich; it conveys a sense of restrained power. You can gaze into its depths with the feeling that they are inexhaustible, like a glow of a winter

fire; and to crown all, there is the tender glaze feeling, as Mr. Gladstone said, "like the touch of a baby's hand," and flowing like a limpid stream over its sparkling bed. Words fail me when I try to adequately describe this most wonderful of ceramic productions, and I am bound to confess that I envy you the possession of it. A great contrast to the Rookwood ware, but equally beautiful in its ways, is the Royal Copenhagen porcelain. This differs essentially from the other in that it is pure porcelain, while the Rookwood is pottery, yet both are decorated before the hard fire tries the ware. Both have the luscious tenderness of glaze, and both display the highest artistic skill in decoration.

*Official report of Dr. Otto N. Witt to the Prussian Gov't, on
Chemical Industry at the World's Fair.*

"That the ceramic industry in America is also capable of a very important independent development technically and artistically, if only it is in the hands of persons who strive and think for themselves, is shown by the exhibit of the Rookwood Pottery Company of Cincinnati, which . . . belongs to the most important displays of the Columbian Exhibition, and which is examined by all visitors with universal wonder . . . The Rookwood factory . . . is an independent American industrial art establishment of the first rank. . . . One of the artistic merits of Rookwood lies in the fact that it has understood how to make the capricious play of accident its co-operator."

"New York Sun." 1889.

"The most artistic and creditable ceramic work that has yet been produced in this country. . . . The faience of Cincinnati can now hold its own with the best English and Continental glazes, while the special

direction of Mrs. Storer's endeavor has imparted to it a distinct and interesting character that is wholly its own."

"Berlin Tageblatt," Feb. 22, 1894 Report of a lecture by Professor Julius Lessing on recent acquisitions of objects of American Art for the Industrial Art Museum, Berlin.

"In American art pottery the collection of acquisitions contains some precious pieces, pitchers and vases from the Rookwood Pottery in Cincinnati; a wonderful effect is produced in them by the harmonious arrangement of color in refined gradations of tone; from beneath the glaze appear charming decorations in leafwork, and often also flowers and animals naturalistically handled."

"Engineering News." New York City. 1894.

"M. Victor Champier, who was commissioned by the French Minister of Public Instruction and Fine Arts to report on art industries and art schools at Chicago, presented Rookwood pottery to the Museum of the Sevres Manufactory, as being especially worthy of careful notice."

Paris letter on the Exposition of 1889.

"Rookwood Pottery was an instant revelation on the opening day, and immediate attention was given to it in the local newspapers and among the fabricants."

Zeitschrift des bayerischen Kunst-Gewerbe Vereins, Munchen, 1894, No. 4, p. 59. Article by L. Gmelin on "Kunst gewerbliches von der Weltausstellung in Chicago."

"Really beautiful, and that not only in comparison with the other American ceramics, is the ware of the Rookwood Pottery in Cincinnati. . . . Ornamented with rare taste . . . in a flat relief slip decoration in various colors applied with artistic freedom, their great

charm comes from the variously colored glazes which give each piece a rich change of color and the mirror-like glitter of the surface, to which often goldstone effects add themselves, gives all these pieces a depth and luminosity of irresistible charm."

Edwin Atlee Barber, Author of "The Pottery and Porcelain of the United States."

"The exhibit of Rookwood faience at Chicago commanded the admiration of the world. . . . The English and French potters found in this marvelous development of an indigenous American art a never failing source of astonishment, and were compelled to acknowledge that it surpassed anything that had ever been accomplished in the same direction by their countrymen."



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